



The Letter

A publication of the
Austin Area Translators and
Interpreters Association

AATIA Interview with Newsletter Editor Mike Conner

AATIA: When did you join AATIA?

Mike Conner: So long ago that I don't even remember; in the mid-1980s? I had been involved in a local translators' association, called TRACT (Translators Association of Central Texas) in the previous decade, but its membership was small, and it lacked the critical mass to prosper. The core group experienced burnout, and TRACT folded.

AATIA: Did AATIA already have a newsletter then? Was it always called *The Letter*? Who came up with that name?

MC: Early in AATIA's history, Harvie Jordan, one of the founding members, began sending an actual letter to announce meetings. For lack of a better name, he called it *The Letter*. At some point, possibly when he became President, he transferred responsibility to the Director of Communications, at the time Patricia Thickstun.

AATIA: When / how did you get involved in the newsletter? Did you have a background in publishing, in any form?

MC: I volunteered to help with its production as a more typical newsletter. Then, several months in, Patricia asked me to become Editor. As a teenager my first job was at the local newspaper. It was mostly janitorial work but gave me an up-close view of small-town journalism. I worked on my high school newspaper in the 1960s and a neighborhood newsletter and a monthly fanzine that hosted play-by-mail games of the board game Diplomacy in the 1970s. These were type-and-paste efforts before computers arrived and changed everything.

AATIA: What were the major steps in the evolution of the newsletter?

MC: It became clear early on that MS Word was not the best platform for the future vision of *The Letter*. After trying Adobe PageMaker, which turned out to be vastly overpowered for our project, we settled on MS Publisher.

AATIA: Was anyone else ever involved in producing the newsletter. – i.e. did you ever have regular help from another member?

MC: Despite our desire to involve the members, it was hard to break down the production into separate tasks, especially for a control freak like me. So many members helped in various capacities: writing articles, organizing address labels, assembling and mailing the finished product. We often gathered for mailing parties.

AATIA: How often was it published?

MC: Bimonthly, roughly ten days before each general meeting.

AATIA: How many pages did it usually have? Did it ever have color? Or was it always B&W?

MC: It started as one page, front and back, but then expanded to four, then eight pages. Color was available when we put it on www.aatia.org.